

# **The Ganja Document.**

## **Exploring decriminalization in St. Lucia.**

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**Summary**

## Table of contents

	page
Introduction	
Addressing crime	1
Why decriminalize	1
The Law	4
Identifying the problem group	8
The Ganja Culture in St. Lucia	9
How alcohol affects the equation	10
Ganja Economics	11
Agriculture	12
Ganja Tourism	13
Exploring the regional and international impact	14
History	14
Religion	14
Medical uses	15
Heath Risks	16
How it was made illegal in the US	16
Human rights perspective	17
Arguments against decriminalization	18
Recommendations	20
Conclusion	20

## INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared as a result of a combination of factors, one of the main being the collective consensus of some prominent voices in St. Lucia, expressing their convictions publicly regarding the treatment of cannabis offences and its effects on the society. They are united in their belief that the way the laws regarding cannabis crimes are carried out, is doing more harm than good. The director of the Caribbean Drug and Alcohol Research Institute has also asked us to explore an argument for the decriminalizing of cannabis from a crime reduction standpoint.

The fast paced cannabis reform that is occurring in the U.S. is also reason for serious concern. What the state of California is proposing is revolutionary to say the least. They are proposing the legalization of cannabis for recreational use, so as to stimulate the Californian economy that is almost bankrupt. There are fifteen states that have decriminalized for medical use. It has also been my personal belief that the law is unjust from a human rights standpoint, and as a result, is causing discrimination by the police. The law as it stands is also retarding progress in our drive towards agricultural diversification into non-traditional crop areas. Hopefully, this document is just the first step in a series of activities that will engage the entire population in objective discourse relating to the decriminalization of cannabis in St. Lucia.

This initial brief will outline several arguments for the decriminalization of cannabis in St. Lucia, as well as inform and educate the general public about the cannabis plant and its many uses, in order to convince them that decriminalization is one of the mechanisms that can be used to tackle the escalating crime problem in the country. We want to present an objective, rational argument using documented facts. We intend for this document to initiate a healthy, constructive debate by providing forums where opposing views and opinions can be voiced, so as to establish a general consensus that would assist in future “drug” policy development. We realize that this is an extremely passionate and sensitive issue, with many members of the St. Lucian society arguing from opposing sides. We want all arguments to be heard.

There are many myths and misconceptions that circulate throughout society due to the negative propaganda disseminated over the last seven decades by the powers that intend to profit, by keeping people ignorant of the facts as well as by the politically motivated. We will attempt to refute many of these misconceptions and claims as we believe that the more that society understands the truth about the plant and its long history with mankind, the more prepared society will be to deal with the possible social repercussions and implications associated with the idea of decriminalization. This doc. will explore the consequences, both positive and negative, of decriminalizing cannabis for its industrial, medical and recreational uses. In doing so, hopefully we will convince the skeptics that decriminalizing cannabis can be used as a mechanism to reduce crime and unemployment among the youth in St. Lucia as well as create a whole new economically viable, renewable and sustainable industry.

## Addressing Crime:

The idea of decriminalization is not a new one, as several countries have been using this technique to fight crime for over a decade, with all countries recording successes. If we could significantly reduce the number of violent crimes, that is, crimes that affect our person and property, there is a great possibility that people could stop living in fear of being the next victim of a violent crime in this country, and as a result, enjoy a better quality of life, a goal we all aspire to achieve. Apart from improving the life of St. Lucians, it is paramount that we create a safe atmosphere everywhere on the island for our visitors. It is of the utmost importance to reduce the number of violent crimes as our major foreign money earning industry is tourism.

## Why decriminalize?

1. Decriminalizing will influence the way in which the police treat the young men of this country when confronting them during police operations. We believe that attitudes towards the police need to change in order for the police to execute their duties more efficiently. We think that the young men of this country need to respect the police if the police are going to be more successful in their fight against crime. At present, many young men have a negative view of the police and as a result, they behave hostile and un-cooperative when confronted by the police. Because cannabis is illegal and because so many young men use it, a number of police have basically criminalized all young men, resulting in the use of aggressive behavior directed towards these youths. The truth is, that out of the number of young men who use cannabis, only a very small percentage of them are actually involved in violent criminal activity, their only crime being the possession of a controlled substance; **a victimless non violent crime**. Surely, an individual with five dollars worth of vegetative material on his or her person cannot be considered a danger to anyone. The aggressive treatment used by some police while on their search and seizure operations should be reserved for dealing with dangerous criminals. What is even more worrying is that many of these young men who are very often well mannered, hard working non violent individuals, end up in jail with hardened criminals where they become exposed to real criminal behavior and leave jail with criminal minds that they had never possessed prior to being incarcerated. This is the total opposite effect that we as a society desire. We do not want to create more criminals, but reduce the amount of criminals circulating among us. Many of these young men feel that they are victims of police brutality as they are roughed up for no apparent reason. They think that they are not committing a crime against anyone. The police then become the enemy and as a result are treated with little respect by the people in the community, where they have behaved in an unacceptable manner. These are the very young men with whom we need to build bridges, as they are the ones that could help the police solve crimes. These are the young men that could provide

valuable information to the police when crimes have been perpetrated, as on many occasions these young men are witnesses to violent crimes or have knowledge about certain violent crimes.

The police need intelligence in order to solve crimes and with little intelligence, crimes can be very difficult to solve. We are always hearing pleas from the police for members of the public to come forward with information that could assist them with solving crimes. We can see that there is obvious reluctance by people to come forward, as their attitude towards the police leaves a lot to be desired. The police need to improve their public image by changing the way they operate. The police need to form alliances with these young men by gaining their trust and respect. There must be compromise. Let us face hard facts: the police will never stop the use of cannabis among the thousands of users in the country, but if some sort of mutual understanding can be attained with the help of the changing of the law relating to cannabis, the job of the police will be made that much easier and effective.

2. Decriminalizing will affect the way in which the police manage their operations. With limited resources, the police need to prioritize their operations. For example, which operation is more important to the citizens of the country? (a) An eradication exercise, where the police spend time and money searching for cannabis plantations, where they find themselves in isolated areas for long periods of time, far removed from populated areas, so that when a serious crime is being committed, they are way out of reach. Or (b) A patrol exercise where the police make their presence felt by maximum exposure in populated areas and hot spots. If the effect of the two operations were assessed, the patrol presence would have a much more positive effect on crime reduction. A strong police presence will make would- be criminals think twice about committing a crime. The combined effect of a greater police presence, as well as a more respectful and co-operative ghetto youth will obviously have a positive effect on the way we fight violent crime in St. Lucia. We need to give the police as much assistance as possible so that they will be able to carry out their duties more efficiently.
3. Decriminalizing would allow the cannabis industry to develop and grow, both on the industrial hemp side of the industry as well as the “ganja” side of the industry, providing much needed jobs and money for the economy. With jobs and money circulating throughout the economy, many of the young men will now be occupied and making money and as a result, will not have the time, need or desire to commit violent crimes in an effort to survive.
4. Decriminalizing will assist the justice system by reducing the number of drug cases that the courts will have to deal with, as no longer will cannabis offences require the courts to deliberate over them. This in turn saves the courts valuable time to deal with more serious cases, easing the back log of existing cases and saving the tax payers money that would have been spent on prosecuting individuals for frivolous offences.

5. Decriminalizing will have a positive impact on the overcrowding problem being experienced at the Bordelais Correctional facility, as all persons now housed at the facility for cannabis offences will be freed by way of an amnesty. Persons that would have been sentenced will no longer have to serve jail time, which will create much desired space for violent criminals who need to be removed from civil society. The taxpayer will no longer have to feed people in prison who should not be there in the first place and who could have been making a positive contribution to society. It costs the country \$2,000.00 to house an inmate in Bordelais for a month. In 2008, there were 61 inmates there for cannabis possession offences. That is \$120,000.00 per month, for at least four months, adds up to almost a half a million dollars! In these hard economic times, saving this much money is prudent.

If we weigh all the benefits mentioned above, we will see that decriminalizing would have a significant positive effect on both the criminal justice system as well as the way we fight violent crime in the future.

### **The Law:**

In laymen's terms, the law relating to cannabis basically states that to be in possession of any part of the cannabis plant, to grow it, to sell it, to import or export it is illegal. The law deals with different cannabis activities individually.

For example there are laws relating to:

1 Possession - Sec. 7 (1) (2) (3) (4), which relates to persons in possession of amounts of 15 grams or less.

2 Cultivation or production - Sec. 6 (1) (2) (3) as well as Sec. 8 (1) (2) where persons are involved with the growing of cannabis.

3 Trafficking - Sec. 2 (1) (a) (b) where persons are involved with the export or import of cannabis or are involved in the sale of cannabis to an individual or individuals of more than 15 grams.

We think that sentences relating to the offences above are much too harsh and need to be changed. The sentences as they stand now can be found in the Third Schedule. They state that for:

- (a) Possession (section 7 (2)): one can be charged with 3 years in prison or \$100,000.00 on summary, or 7 years or \$200,000.00 on indictment.
- (b) For production or cultivation (section 6 (2) and \or 8 (2)): one can be charged with 3 years or \$100,000.00 on summary, or 14 years or \$200,000.00 on indictment.
- (c) Possession with intent to supply to another (section 7 (3)): one can be charged with 3 years or \$100,000.00 on summary or 14 years or \$200,000.00 on indictment.

- (d) Importation or exportation (section 5 (3)): one can be charged with 3 years or \$100,000.00 on summary or 14 years or \$200,000.00 on indictment.

It is clear to see that these sentences border on outrageous, although there is hardly a magistrate that would charge a person with the maximum sentence stated above. The point is that there should be no jail sentence at all. There should be no mention of cannabis in the Misuse of Drugs Act.

Fortunately there is a process that can change or amend laws if deemed necessary. It is important to understand the players involved when dealing with the alteration of the law as the process has a few steps.

1. The Drug Advisory Council (section 3. – (1) (2) (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (3) is basically a body that is responsible for monitoring the effects of the misuse of drugs on St. Lucian society. It is the responsibility of this body to consult the Minister, (Minister of Health), or be consulted by the Minister on measures whether or not involving the alteration of the law if it sees fit to do so, if it is observed that a drug is having an effect, whether positive or negative on society.
2. The Minister may after consulting with or on the recommendation of the Advisory Council make such amendments to the second schedule, as may be requisite for the purpose of adding any substance to or removing any substance from any of Parts 1 to 3 of that schedule. (Section 4 – (2)).
3. The Minister may make such other provisions as he thinks fit for the purpose of making it lawful for persons to do things, which under the following provisions of the Act, that is to say sections 6 (1), 7 (1) and 8 (1), it would otherwise be unlawful for them to do. (Section 9 - (b), (2) (a) (b)).

Therefore, the Minister on the advice of the Drug Advisory Council has the power to bring a bill to parliament and have it voted on. Presently cannabis is listed as a substance under Class A Drug category which contains the most dangerous drugs, both pharmaceutical and illicit, and as a result attracts the most harsh penalties for any involvement with the substance. We would want it to be re categorized as a Class C drug.

**Ganja economics in St. Lucia:** Many citizens of this country who are in no way involved or who are totally removed from the ganja culture, are completely ignorant of the significant financial boost this sector adds to the economy. This is money that circulates among the lower classes, the under educated, the ghetto youth and the underprivileged. This is a hidden economy, meaning that it exists under the radar of Government, but contributes significantly to the alleviation of poverty among many of the poor people of this nation. This is not a “trickle down” economic model like tourism, but a “filter up” economic model like any agricultural based model. Money generated from the ganja industry, is money that stays in the country as opposed to tourism dollars

where a large percentage of it ends up overseas. Reality is that there are just not enough legitimate jobs out there to employ everyone, and if there is indeed an industry that contributes so significantly, then why try to destroy it? We suggest that if EC \$ 40,000,000.00 were removed from the cash flow of this economy every year, there would be much more violent criminal activity taking place today. By decriminalizing, the Government may well be able to generate revenues by taxing parts of the sector as suggested by the State of California in the U.S.

- Calculation 1. - If 12 % of the total population or approximately 20,000 people purchase five dollars worth of cannabis a day for a year, the total money generated would equal EC \$36,500,000.00.
- Calculation 2. - If one pound of cannabis is worth an average of EC\$500.00, and a 20% tax is placed on the producer, then the Government receives EC\$100.00 per pound. If on an average 50,000 pounds are produced by growers in a year, then the Government will generate EC\$ 5 million per year.
- Calculation 3. - If 2,000 licenses at E.C. \$1,500.00 were issued to people every year, in order that they can legally vend cannabis, this would generate \$3,000,000.00 for the Government.
- Calculation 4. – The potential monetary earnings that could be generated by cannabis tourism. It is difficult to calculate as so many parts of the tourism sector could be affected, from increased occupancy rates in hotels to increased incomes realized by people in the cannabis industry.

Apart from being a literal lifeline to many people, where income from cannabis acts like a supplement to their small daily wages, and a much needed monetary injection to the economy, it is quite plain to see that this could be a potential source of substantial revenue for the Government.

**Its impact on agriculture:** Because of the decline of the banana industry that used to employ up to thirteen thousand people directly and indirectly and now which only employs about four thousand or less, the job market has declined significantly leaving many unemployed. Many farm labourers made the move to the construction industry when the banana industry began to shrink. This was a relatively smooth transition for many, as both jobs are labour intensive. But the construction industry has not absorbed all the migrant agricultural workers and is seasonal to say the least. Though there is a constant loss of agricultural land to development, a more intensive higher return per acre crop can replace the traditional agricultural model. There is also a great need for an agricultural renaissance. With a fast growing world population and the need to feed these masses we must pro-act and begin to produce and consume more locally grown food. Presently, St. Lucia imports much of its food when there is potential for locally produced foods. Using cannabis as a lure, we can capture the imagination of the young men and get them to look at agriculture in a new way. Once we get them there, they can be taught



many other agricultural techniques relating to other crops. Planted in rotation, a proud group of young farmers could be our lifeline literally to a positive, self sustaining future. Apart from providing cannabis for its many uses, industrial, medicinal and recreational, these young farmers can produce much of the vegetables that we now import.

**Cannabis Tourism:** Since tourism is our main foreign income earner and competition is strong among island destinations, cannabis tourism can give St. Lucia that much needed competitive edge in the market. This is not a revolutionary idea, as for almost two decades Amsterdam in Holland has been involved in cannabis tourism in the form of coffee shop or cannabis café establishments where patrons can purchase and use cannabis legally within the confines of the building. There are 300 coffee shops in Amsterdam which generates almost half a billion US dollars worth of business a year.

**Exploring the International and Regional impact:** A country's drug laws are influenced by international treaties that tend to be regional in nature. European drug laws for instance, are governed by a treaty written for all the E.U. countries, but is used just as a basic guideline for the individual country, as we see that every country in the E.U. treats drug related offences differently. Some take a more lenient stance than others, with each country respecting the other's individual decision to treat the law as they see it fit to do so. We in the Caribbean are influenced by international treaties as well, one example being the "Shiprider Agreement". Unfortunately in our case, more outside forces come into play as the U.S. has been fighting a war on drugs for the past thirty years and which they are losing terribly. We in the Caribbean are deeply involved as drug traffickers use the Caribbean as trans-shipment points to get cocaine from South America to the U.S and Europe. Even within the Caribbean, each individual country treats their illegal drug trade differently. This would certainly be a test for the region if St. Lucia acts unilaterally and change their drug laws to deal with their internal crime problems.

**History:** There are historical records to prove that the cannabis plant has been used by man as far back as 5000 years ago in India and China. It was used primarily for industrial uses and in religious ceremonies where it was used by high priests as a vehicle to enhance the spiritual experience and for medical reasons to cure physical ailments. The plant then moved west along trade routes to the Middle East and North Africa. Back then the plant was manufactured into incense and was highly regarded by many different religious sects. Apart from its medical and religious uses, the plant also produced fibers for rope and paper and seeds were used for food and oil, making the plant one of the most important plants in human history. If this plant has such a distinguished history with man over the last five thousand years then why has it been made illegal in the last seventy years?

**Religion:** Even today in Christian rituals, incense is still being used in the church although not cannabis incense. This ritual dates back millennium when cannabis incense was one of the incense used. Apart from being used in religious ceremonies, the use of mind altering substances by high priests and shamans of religious sects has been going for thousands of years and still goes on today, in India, Pakistan, North America, South

America and Africa. Cannabis is used specifically in India, Pakistan and Africa for religious ceremonies. The use of cannabis is said to enhance the spiritual consciousness of the user, opening up the mind to Godly enlightenment. Even if one is not part of a religious sect, cannabis tends to assist the user to focus on more calm and spiritual thoughts and make one more appreciative of all things natural.

**Medical Uses:** Research has shown that cannabis has been used for medicinal purposes for millennium. Today cannabis has been proven to be effective in combating many ailments and is used to increase the quality of life for patients suffering from severe or terminal illnesses. Some of the diseases and medical conditions that cannabis has been proven to help improve a patients quality of life or cure are MS, asthma, glaucoma, wasting syndrome in AIDS, nausea and loss of appetite in chemo patients and insomnia to name a few. Cannabis is also being used in India to help get people addicted to heroin to kick the addiction. Even here in St. Lucia, cannabis is being used as an aid to get drug addicts hooked on crack cocaine off of it, the theory being that if someone is going to be an addict, cannabis is much safer substance to be using than crack cocaine. Here we have a plant that has the potential to help many sufferers and because of misinformation, propaganda and paranoia, we are prevented from capitalizing on it's medicinal potential.

### **The Health Risks associated with Cannabis Abuse:**

It is important to note that according to medical literature, drug use only becomes abuse when the use of the substance significantly interferes with the users daily life. But if even there is no abuse, there are still health concerns associated with cannabis use. The conditions below are usually associated with the abuse of the substance.

**Mental Health Problems** – Much research conducted recently suggests that there is a strong relationship between cannabis abuse and schizophrenia. People that are pre-disposed to any mental illness, will usually experience an intensification of that condition when using cannabis. Studies have had convincing results that show that a small percentage of cannabis abusers may develop mental problems because of its use. Short term memory loss is generally associated with cannabis use, even among people who do not abuse the substance. Personality disorders are also associated with cannabis abuse.

**Cardio respiratory problems** – The intake of any kind of smoke into the lungs is not healthy and studies show that heavy users can develop chronic respiratory problems such as a persistent heavy cough, phlegm production and chest illnesses which can lead to lung infections. The intake of carbon can lead to the hardening of arteries, stroke, irregular heartbeat and increased heartbeat. One study has indicated that an abuser's risk of heart attack more than quadruples in the first hour after smoking cannabis.

**Cancer-** There are a number of carcinogens found in cannabis that would suggest the abuse can lead to the development of certain cancers in the lungs. It possibly increases the risk of cancer of the head and neck also.

When considering the risks relating to the abuse of cannabis, we can see that there are real dangers to the health of the user. Although many of these studies have not shown conclusive results, common sense alone should lead us to believe that the use of the substance does not go without the possibility of encountering some negative effects. But again we must make some comparison to the risks of the two legal drugs heavily marketed in St. Lucia, those of tobacco and alcohol, with cannabis and decide which have greater negative medical effects to the body, and both tobacco and alcohol have proven to cause significantly more damage to health of the society.

**How it got illegal in the U.S.:** It is important for us to know this history as it affects us directly. Being a nation of black people, we must understand that this law is shrouded in racism. Blacks and Hispanics in the U.S. were demonized and used by the white establishment of the time to persuade the U.S. Government to change the law. The parties involved were white racists who used the Mexicans and Blacks as negative examples of who cannabis users were and the dangers they would present to the white citizens when intoxicated on cannabis, striking fear into the hearts of every white man. The truth is that the Mexicans and Black Americans did and still do use cannabis. Back in the times of the great depression in the U.S., many Blacks and Mexicans in the southern part of the country were using cannabis. It was nicknamed “maryjane” at the time and could be found growing wild. But with the invention of petrochemicals, the emerging pharmaceutical and synthetic textile industry, lobbyists for the respective industries wanted the competition from industrial hemp eliminated. Randolph Hearst the newspaper magnate, Alsinger the then drug czar and Du Point the petrochemical pioneer conspired to make cannabis illegal, by creating a smear campaign using Blacks and Mexicans as the fall guys. They even changed the name of the plant from English to Spanish to create a darker picture, hence the name “marijuana” came into being. Their campaign was successful and within fifteen minutes the law was passed making cannabis illegal in 1937. Now blacks account for more than fifty percent of the inmates in American prisons even though they represent only ten percent of the population, with almost fifty percent in jail for simple possession charges. I ask myself, “How can we as a black nation not see the racial injustice of this law?” What is even more disturbing is that we in St. Lucia promote the very drug that kept our ancestors in slavery for two hundred years, while denying black people an ancient African tradition.

**The Human Rights Perspective:** The phrase “Equal rights and justice to all” comes to mind when examining the cannabis law as it relates to the basic human rights of the individual here in St. Lucia. It is completely unacceptable that a nation that condones, and promotes the use of alcohol could take such a draconian stance towards the use of a substance such as cannabis. Why is the law there in the first place? Is the country really concerned about the health and welfare of users and trying to do the right thing and save the users from themselves? If so, then the issue is one of health and should be treated in that manner, as opposed to treating it as a criminal offence.

## Arguments Against decriminalization:

**a. Gateway drug:** The theory is based on the premise that by using cannabis, there will be a natural progression for the user to seek out harder substances. This means that cannabis is a weak substance and as a result, the user will feel the need to try harder substances, “chasing a higher high”. Then it leads to reason that if this is the case, then it will make the user desire something stronger. And if we are admitting that it is a relatively weak substance, then why is there the level of concern? We suggest that it is not the substance itself that leads people to harder substances, but it is where the substance is obtained which exposes the purchaser to other substances. If there were places where one could only purchase cannabis, in a controlled, safe environment, then it would be impossible for the purchaser to be given a chance to try another more dangerous substance.

Research shows that the actual gateway is the illegal drug market. The World Health Organization noted that any gateway effect associated with cannabis use may be actually due to cannabis prohibition, because “exposure to other drugs when purchasing cannabis on the black market increases the opportunity to use other illicit drugs.”

**b. Cannabis is a hard drug:** A hard drug is defined as a substance that if taken in excessive quantities, will cause serious injury or death. Cannabis is a plant, not a drug, unfortunately the system has redefined the meaning of drug to incorporate this specific plant. Unlike cocaine, heroin and morphine, drugs derived from plants via a processing system, cannabis is used in its natural form. There is no process that turns the plant into ganja, the flowers are ganja.

Below is a chart that records the number of American deaths per year that result directly or primarily from the following selected causes nationwide, according to World Almanacs, Life Insurance death rates, and the last 20 years of U.S. Surgeon Generals’ reports. ( Figures are for 1988 from the federal governments Bureau of Mortality Statistics and the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

TOBACCO:	340,000 to 425,000.
ALCOHOL: (Not including 50% of all highway deaths and 65% of all murders).	150,000.
ASPIRIN: (Including deliberate overdose)	180 to 1,000 plus.
CAFFEINE: (From stress, ulcers and triggering irregular heartbeats etc.)	1,000 to 10,000.
LEGAL DRUG OVERDOSE: (deliberate or accidental from legal, or prescribed or patent medicines and\ or mixing with alcohol – e.g., Valium\alcohol...	14,000 to 27,000.
ILLICIT DRUG OVERDOSE: (deliberate or accidental) from all illegal drugs.	3,800 to 5,200.
THEOPOLINE: (Pharmaceutical drug legally prescribed for asthma)	50.
Theopoline also accounts for 6,500 emergency room admits and 1,000 cases of permanent brain damage per year.	
CANNABIS:	0.

Note - Cannabis users have the same or lower incidence of murders and highway deaths than the general non cannabis using population as a whole. Crancer Study, UCLA; First & Second Jamaican Studies, 1968 to 1974; Costa Rican Studies, 1980 to 1982.

- 100% of the studies done at dozens of American universities and research facilities show cannabis toxicity does not exist. Medical history does not record anyone dying from an overdose of cannabis. (UCLA, Harvard, Temple, etc.).

**c. Decriminalization would lead to more crime:** Because cannabis consumption is so prevalent in St. Lucia at present, there is a lot of ganja commerce that takes place and the concern is that if it were decriminalized, more people would be involved in growing it leading to more predial larceny against growers and robbery against dealers and as a result, more violence.

**d. Causes environmental degradation:** People are using Government lands and unsuitable steep slopes and cutting down forest reserves to grow cannabis.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1 There should be no incarceration of any kind for the possession of any amount of cannabis.
- 2 We need to establish amounts that one can possess on ones person, or at ones residence. Users should be able to have up to one pound in their home without fine, in public, one ounce.
- 3 There should be an amnesty for all persons incarcerated for possession.
- 4 There should also be an established number of plants that one can have growing on ones property.
- 5 We need to establish fines for excesses.
- 6 We need to establish a code of conduct by the police when dealing with cannabis matters.
- 7 We need to tax commercial growers
- 8 Establish fees for licenses to grow and to sell
- 9 These recommendations should be phased in.
- 10 Trial periods for implementation of new laws
- 11 Establish smoking areas
- 12 Form a ganja association
- 13 Create a ganja research center to study cause and effects of the use of cannabis on individuals as well as on society, to be able to produce real facts and figures about the plant.
- 14 Conduct an island wide survey. (see questioner below)

**Conclusion:** With the stroke of a pen, we can effectively eliminate close to 30,000 potential criminals that the police would be using their time and resources to apprehend. The criminal justice system would not have to deal with people that could potentially serve jail time in an already overcrowded prison. Possession of flowers is a victimless non-violent crime and should not attract a sentence of jail time. In this climate of violent crime, we need to get violent offenders off the streets. Jail cells should be reserved for people that are a threat to other citizens, and to have our jail cells filled with persons who are no threat to society, is a crime in itself. So the law as it exists today is actually helping to propagate criminals. A person with five dollars worth of cannabis in his possession is no threat to anyone but himself. A person trying to grab the chain off your neck, or break into your house or car is a potential murderer. These violent offenders are the kind of people that the jail cell is meant for. After reading this paper, one should ask oneself these questions:

Why are we putting people in jail for victimless non-violent crimes?

Why does a black nation promote the use of the very drug whose production kept their ancestors in slavery for two hundred years, yet penalize people for indulging in an African tradition?

Why do we as a society promote the use of a potentially lethal drug yet spend time and resources to fight a relatively safe substance?

Why do we support foreign countries using our nation and our citizens as a platform to fight their war on drugs while they have much more lenient cannabis laws than we do while having a much worse drug abuse problem than we do?

It is plain to see that the law as it relates to cannabis is unfair, outdated and is doing more harm than good for the country and needs to be revised.

